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Organization: Chewelah Peak Mountain Resort

Title:

Comments: 6/20/2016

Rodney Smoldon Forest Supervisor

Colville National Forest 765 South Main Colville, WA 99114

Re: Draft: Colville National Forest Proposed Land and Resource Management Plan Dear Mr. Smoldon,

I am writing today on behalf of the following Entities who have a vested and substantial material interest in the forest planning process: Chewelah Basin Ski Corporation OBA 49° North Mountain Resort, East Basin investments LLC, Alpine Development Group LLC, and Chewelah Peak Investments LLC.

The Chewelah Basin Ski Corporation holds a USFS Special Use Permit (#N EW410104) on the Colville National Forest and runs a year round resort with an emphasis on downhill skiing. East Basin Investments, Alpine Developments Group, and Chewelah Peak Investments all own, manage, and are currently investing in private land contained in section 7, T32N R42E. The private land is an in-holding bordered by USFS system lands.

Since 1974 the Chewelah Basin Ski Corporation has invested over 14 million dollars in the existing 2,000 acre Special Use Permit (SUP). This investment has been made to enable and enhance the outdoor recreation experiences of over 2.8 million skiers and snowboarders. The partnership between the USFS and the Chewelah Basin Ski Corporation has been instrumental in delivering quality family oriented outdoor winter recreation for many decades.

I am concerned that the preferred alternative of the Draft Forest Plan may have the potential to negatively impact the ski area. Previous forest plans, such as the 1987 plan, allowed for active management of areas around and adjacent to the special use permit. The previous forest plan allowed for fuel reduction activities that would help provide a vital Wildland Urban Interface buffer zone between the ski area and adjacent Forest Lands.

The Backcountry designations proposed for the area immediately to the south of the current special use permit will in theory allow for some fuels management of the south faces of Chewelah Peak. Logging methods such as cable logging may be utilized to thin fuels. I am concerned that the methods available for fuels management will not be suitable to provide a buffer of adequate size to protect the resort. Cable logging gear in the interior northwest will allow for up to 800' of clearing under ideal conditions. I am concerned that 800' linear feet on the south face of Chewelah peak is not a suitable buffer to protect the ski area.

Past scoping exercises and community fire plans have recommended proposals that included a buffer between the Quartzite IRA to the south of the ski area and the SUP boundary. The enclosed 4/26/2011 N EWFC Proposed Management Zones Map (attached) shows a roughly 300 acre buffer between the IRA and the SUP. The preferred action alternative for the Draft Colville National Forest Plan has very little, and at some points, no buffer. I would request that you please seriously consider a more substantial buffer zone, one that allows for more active fuels management activities further to the south in the lookout Spring drainage.

Nearly one quarter of all recreational visits to the Colville National take place on the 2,000 acre intensively managed and developed resort (23.3% of respondents to the 2009 national visitor use monitoring project list downhill skiing as the main recreational activity that they participate in on the Colville National Forest). It is the single most visited recreation area in the Colville National Forest. It is one of the most intensively developed and heavily invested-in areas in the Colville National Forest. This unique resource deserves more protection from wild fire than the current plan affords. I request that you please consider a more substantial buffer, one similar to the attached 2001 NEWFC proposed buffer.